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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 002301

SIPDIS

STATE FOR DRL, DRL/PHD, INL, INL/LP, AND DS
STATE FOR WHA/CEN AND WHA/PPC
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PGOV KJUS KCRM SNAR ASEC HO

SUBJECT: HONDURAN MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY CLAIMS MURDER RATE HAS DECLINED IN TWO MAIN CITIES SINCE ANTI-GANG LAW PASSED

REF: A. TEGUCIGALPA 1904

B. TEGUCIGALPA 1938

C. TEGUCIGALPA 2081

¶1. Although still exceptionally high (ref B), according to Minister of Public Security (MOPS) Oscar Alvarez September 23, the murder rate in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula declined approximately 24 percent since the passage of anti-gang legislation in early August (ref A). (Note: As reported in ref B, the methodology used to collect murder statistics varies between different government agencies (as well as NGOs) which leads to significant discrepancies. End Note.)

¶2. According to MOPS Alvarez, since the new anti-gang law came into effect 222 people have been arrested. Of those, 56 percent have been detained for prosecution while the remaining 44 percent have been freed. MOPS Alvarez indicated to DCM that the GOH was targeting gang leaders while attempting to convince the rank-and-file to abandon the gangs.

¶3. While MOPS Alvarez is reporting declining murder rates, Casa Alianza (a child advocacy NGO that tracks the murder of children and youth) states that children and youth murder rates have remained constant, except for a decline in July. Casa Alianza also attributed only 16 percent of the 64 youth and children murders in August to gang members, while 80 percent still have no identified killer.

¶4. COMMENT: Personal security remains the number one concern of the average Honduran and the passage of anti-gang legislation was extremely popular. Popular sentiment, and the GOH, tend to blame gangs for the scourge of violence that has gripped the country. This, however, is a debatable conclusion. If a significant decline in the overall murder rate proves to be more than a short-term phenomenon, it will go a long way toward giving credence to GOH assertions that gangs are to blame for most of the violence. END COMMENT.
Palmer